

Is It Well With Your Family?



Thrust Statement: God wants mothers who are devoted to Him to teach their children the things of God.

Scripture Reading: Luke 2:21-40; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Kings 4:8-26

Today is a day in which countless thousands remember their mothers. One of the sweetest memories that anyone can have is the memory of a good mother. Many of you can remember her tucking you in bed, kissing you goodnight, preparing your meals, kneeling by your bedside and praying with you, reading Bible stories to you as she prepared you for bed, and ministering to you through a night of sickness. This message focuses on three pericopes (Luke 2:21-40; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Kings 4:8-26). The first story is about the parents of Jesus taking Him to the temple for circumcision according to the Law of Moses. The second Scripture reference is about Timothy's mother and grandmother. The third story is about the Shunammite woman and her encounter with Elisha. The major focus of the message surrounds three questions asked by Elisha to the mother.

Jesus Presented in the Temple

Even though one does not know the age of Jesus' mother, nevertheless, one readily observes that she was a woman in whom God found delight. Luke writes: "The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you'" (Luke 1:28)^[1] Again, he records for the "most excellent Theophilus" (1:3) another insightful remark from the angel Gabriel (1:26): "But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God'" (1:30). Why did God find such favor with this young woman? Surely she must have been a very faithful follower of the teachings of Moses and the prophets. One such example, which illustrates her desire to follow the instructions from the Lord is found in her taking Jesus on the eighth day to be circumcised according to the Law of Moses (2:21-24).

The angel Gabriel revealed to Mary that one of her relatives, Elizabeth, was pregnant. Again, one meets a family that is devoted to God. Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, also officiated in the Temple as a priest of God (1:8-10). Upon Mary's entrance into the home of Zechariah and Elizabeth, Luke says that the baby—John the Baptist—leaped in Elizabeth's womb (1:40). Following this episode, one reads about Mary's song in which she extols the greatness and wonder of it all (1:46-55). The one thing that moves one with awe relates to the words that Mary pulls together in order to express the mercy of God upon her and Elizabeth: "His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation" (1:50). This insightful comment lays bare the devotion that Mary and Elizabeth had for their Lord.

Even though the parents of Jesus lived in Galilee during his childhood, still they would go to Jerusalem every year to the Feast of the Passover (2:41). This trip from Galilee to Jerusalem is about sixty miles. Yet this distance did not keep them from making this long trip to observe the Feast of the Passover. Surely, the parents of Jesus followed the words of Moses to the children of Israel:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.^{a 5} Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

It is reasonable to assume that Mary as well as Joseph followed the instructions given by Moses to Jesus and their other children—James, Joseph, Simon, Judas, and His sisters (Matthew 13:55-56). Luke also records that following the baptism of Jesus and His temptation by Satan that He went to Nazareth where He had been brought up and had taught in their synagogues (Luke 4:14-15). The significant thing about this scenario is the statement: "and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom" (4:16). Surely, Jesus attended the synagogues as a small child. Both Joseph and Mary would have taught Jesus about the things of God as commanded by Moses.

As one peruses the lives of Mary and Elizabeth, one conjectures about how the mothers of today would measure up to the devotion exhibited by these two women. What kind of a mother are you? Is your spiritual life such that you create within your children a desire for the holy? Do you take your children to church? Do you read the Word of God to them? Do you teach them to love the Lord God with all their hearts and with all their minds and with all their souls? Do you impress the things of God upon your children? Do you talk about the things of God when you sit in your homes? Do you talk about the things of God when you drive down the road? Do you talk about the things of God when you lie down at night and when you awake the next morning? Where is God in your life and the life of your children? Do you, too, desire to be a godly mother in the raising of your children?

Timothy's Mother and Grandmother

In Paul's last letter ([2 Timothy](#)) to Timothy, he reminds him to remember the words taught him by his mother and grandmother from infancy. Paul writes:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus ([2 Timothy 3:14-15](#)).

Paul credits the faith that Timothy possesses as having a direct association with his grandmother and mother. Paul begins this Epistle with the following comments: "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also" ([1:5](#)). Are you a grandmother? Are you a mother? If so, can your children or grandchildren say that you are a woman of faith in Christ Jesus? Paul's words to Titus are also appropriate for this Mother's Day. Listen to Paul as he instructs Titus about older women and their responsibilities in teaching younger women:

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. ⁴ Then they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, ⁵ to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God ([Titus 2:3-5](#)).

Again, one must ask: What kind of mother are you? Do you love your husband and children? Are you like Lois, the grandmother of Timothy? Are you like Eunice, the mother of Timothy? How do you respond to the following three questions asked by Elisha, a prophet of God: "Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?" ([2 Kings 4:26](#)). The *New Kings James* renders the Hebrew this way: "*Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?*"^[2] These three questions should be answered by every mother. If one were to condense these three questions into one question, perhaps, the summary would be: "Is it well with your family?"

Is It Well With Your Family?

As one reads and rereads the story of the Shunammite's son and Elisha, one discovers a story that is full of meaning for every mother and father living today ([2 Kings 4:37](#)). Hopefully, a careful reading and reflection upon this story will bring home to mothers a true concern for their children. Even though this message is primarily focused upon mothers, nevertheless, one can draw conclusions that should awaken every father's attention, too; that is to say, the three questions asked by Elisha to the Shunammite woman: "Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?" ([4:26](#)). Do you mothers and fathers spend time with your children? Frequently, mothers and fathers labor under the stress of the workplace and do not have time for their children, even in the evenings or their day off. Frequently small children wish to share their experiences with their mothers and with their fathers when they return home, but the response by many parents is: "Not now, honey, I'm busy, go watch television."

But “not now” never comes around. If not “now,” when? If parents fail to communicate when their children are small, it will be too late when children come in as teenagers with “glassy eyes” from drugs or alcohol. Perhaps, at this late date in their lives, you respond by saying, “We need to sit down and talk.” But the time is too late. Love has passed you and the child by. There are many encounters in life that can break one’s heart, but there is nothing that can break one’s heart like the loss of a child. Parents can lose their children due to broken relationships. Christian mothers and fathers can lose their children by failure to build strength of character by spending time with them. These comments bring the story of the well-to-do woman of Shunem (4:8) and her journey to see Elisha (4:22-26) to the hearts of every mother.

Elisha and a Mother’s Love

Elisha, a prophet of the Lord, spent much time in the land proclaiming the Word of the Lord. This woman, devoted to the Lord, would invite Elisha to stay in her home for a meal (4:8). She realized that this man was different from other men. In other words, she came to the realization that this man was “a holy man of God” (4:9). Whereupon, she persuaded her husband to build an extra room onto their home and furnish this room with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp (4:10). How should modern women and men react to individuals whose lives today are dedicated to preaching the Word of God and to prayer for the people of God? Mothers and fathers do you possess this kind of devotion for the servants of God?

Because of her kindness and devotion, Elisha wanted to know if he could do anything for her. The author of the **Book of Kings** reports the following comments by Elisha:

One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. ¹² He said to his servant Gehazi, “Call the Shunammite.” So he called her, and she stood before him. ¹³ Elisha said to him, “Tell her, ‘You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?’” She replied, “I have a home among my own people” (4:11-13).

Elisha still wanted to do something for her. As Elisha reflected upon this woman, he said to Gehazi, his servant: “‘What can be done for her?’ Elisha asked. Gehazi said, ‘Well, she has no son and her husband is old’” (4:14). Following this conversation with Gehazi, he called for the Shunammite woman and said:

Then Elisha said, “Call her.” So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. ¹⁶ “About this time next year,” Elisha said, “you will hold a son in your arms.” “No, my lord,” she objected. “Don’t mislead your servant, O man of God!” ¹⁷ But the woman became pregnant, and the next year about that same time she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her (4:15-17).

Elisha said to the woman what every woman desires that is barren. One can almost feel the anguish this woman feels as she pleads with him not to mislead her: “Don’t mislead your servant, O man of God!” (4:16). Yes, the following year she held a

baby in her arms. If one has experienced a birth in the family, one can remember the joy and excitement for the baby. As the mother holds the new born baby, one can observe the joy that radiates her face. Yes, children are a heritage from the Lord. There is nothing that can create such joy in the lives of mothers and fathers as little children.

Well, a little boy or girl is born and everyone lives happily ever after. Right? No. Life, unfortunately, is not always that way. This author (Dallas Burdette) still remembers the death of his first daughter (Rebecca) who died in January 1963. Also, I remember the birth of my grandson Elijah Johnson (February 25, 1997). I can still remember the joy in my daughter's eyes as she held her little son. But things did not go well. On the sixteenth day of August in the year 2000, Elijah went to be with the Lord. My daughter Rachael held his lifeless body for at least an hour before the doctor took his dead body away. I have related these two stories to set the stage for the broken heart of the Shunammite woman who, too, lost her son that God gave her.

One day, this young man, went to visit his father in the field (4:18). While there, he told his father that his head hurt: "My head! My head!" he said to his father" (4:19). He was taken home, not by his father, but by one of his servants (4:19-20). Then, she, like any mother, took the child in her lap and comforted him. This is not the end of the story; the boy died (4:20). Immediately, she sent word to her husband to send one of his servants and a donkey so she could go to see the "man of God" (4:22). The mother did not tell the father of the child's death (4:23). When the father inquired as to why she wanted to go and see the prophet, she replied, "It's all right" (4:23). When Elisha saw her coming, he asked: "Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?" (4:26).

Mothers, how do you respond to the first question "Is it well with you?" (KJV). Even though Elisha had a particular reason for asking this question, still, one should ask himself/herself this same question in relationship to one's spiritual life with one's children. If mothers do not present themselves as examples of good morals and good character, then the rest of the land goes down the tube with her. As the mothers go, so goes the society. Children live out their lives as they see them reflected in their mothers and fathers. Since this sermon is exploring primarily mothers, one must focus upon the role model that mothers play in their children's spiritual maturity. What kind of a mother are you in your devotion to God? What kind of a mother are you in your church attendance on Sundays? What kind of a mother are you in the language your children hear? What kind of a mother are you in the reading of God's Word? Will your children call you blessed in later life? If not, why not?

The second question asked by Elisha concerns the husband—"Is your husband all right?" As one reflects upon this story, one cannot help but observe that when the boy got sick, the father asked one of his servants to take the boy to his mother (4:18-20). One cannot help but wonder if the father was too busy to fool with his sick son. If parents would look around, they would hear their children crying out for their moms and dads. "Dad, my head! My head! Father, my heart! My heart! Dad, my soul! My soul! And what do fathers do? They just keep on working. The following is a true story about a young man about to be sentenced to the penitentiary. The judge had known this young man from childhood; he also was well acquainted with his father who was a famous legal scholar and the author of an exhaustive study on "The Law of Trust." This is the story:

The judge asked the young man, “Do you remember your father?” “I remember him well, your honor,” came the reply. Then trying to probe the offender’s conscience, the judge said, “As you are about to be sentenced and as you think of your wonderful dad, what do you remember most clearly about him?” There was a pause. Then the judge received an answer he had not expected. “I remember when I went to him for advice. He looked up at me from the book he was writing and said, “Run along, boy; I’m busy!” When I went to him for companionship, he turned me away, saying “Run along, son; this book must be finished!” Your honor, you remember him as a great lawyer. I remember him as a lost friend. The magistrate muttered to himself, “Alas! Finished the book, but lost the boy!”

CONCLUSION

Mothers and fathers should awaken to the responsibility that God has placed upon their shoulders. Moms, Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with your child? Have you observed the devotion of the Shunammite woman to her son? She was not about to give up on her son without a fight. Yes, he had died in her arms, but she refused to let him go. There appears to be a great contrast between the mother’s reaction and the father’s response to his sick son. One cannot help but wonder why the father did not pick up his own sick child. Did he have more important things to do? Hopefully this Mother’s Day message will cause each mother, each grandmother, each father, and each grandfather to reevaluate their relationship to their children and grandchildren.

Since children generally live out their lives as they see life reflected in their parents, mothers and fathers should live out their lives in such a way that they will instill in them a love for God and His holiness. Children need to feel the touch of their mother’s love and hand. They need to hear words of encouragement about their accomplishments. Children need to be reminded that they are a gift from the Lord to their parents. Let them know that they belong to God. Do you put your children down or do you tell them that they are children of God? Does this praise make a difference in your child’s life? Listen to the following story told my Dr. Fred Craddock about how the life of a mother and the words of a preacher changed a young boy’s self-confidence.

He tells the story of how he and his wife were vacationing in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. One night while they were dining, they noticed an older, white-haired gentleman going around and shaking hands. Craddock tells how he whispered to his wife, “I hope he doesn’t come over here.” But the man came over and inquired as to where they were from. “Oklahoma,” responded Craddock. Again, the friendly man asked, “What do you do for a living?” Craddock said, “I teach homiletics at the graduate seminary of Phillips University.” “Oh, so you teach preachers how to preach, do you? Well, I’ve got a story to tell you, said Ben Hooper.

As Hooper began his story, he told Craddock that he was born out of wedlock. He related to Craddock that his mother wasn’t married when he was born, so he had a pretty hard time. He recounted how that at school the children would say things to him that cut deeply. “What was worse,” he said, “was going to town on Saturday and feeling like every eye in town was burning a hole through me, wondering just who my father was.” And as he continued his story, he said, “When I was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to our church. I would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast I got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. I could feel

every eye in the church on me. Just about the time I got to the door I felt a big hand on my shoulder. I looked up and the preacher was looking right at me. ‘Who are you, son?’ he asked. I felt this big weight coming down on me. It was like a big black cloud. Even the preacher was putting me down. But as he looked down at me, studying my face, he began to smile a big smile of recognition. ‘Wait a minute!’ he said. ‘I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.’ With that he slapped me across the rump and said, ‘boy, you’ve got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.’”

After the man left, Craddock remembered his study of Tennessee history that on two occasions, the people of Tennessee elected two different individuals to the state’s highest office—Governor of Tennessee—that were born out of wedlock. One of them was a man named Ben Hooper. Even though his father abandoned him, one can thank God that he had a mother who was devoted to him. Are you devoted to your children? Are you seeking to implant into their hearts a love for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Are you telling your children that they are children of God? Are you teaching them to put God first in their lives? Are you telling them that one must love God with all their hearts, with all their souls, and with all their minds? Are you setting forth an example for your children to follow? Will they say, later in life, my mother was a great Christian mother? Mothers, will your children call you blessed in later life? If not, why not?

^[1]All Scripture citations are from *the New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), unless stated otherwise.

^[2]*The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996, c1982).